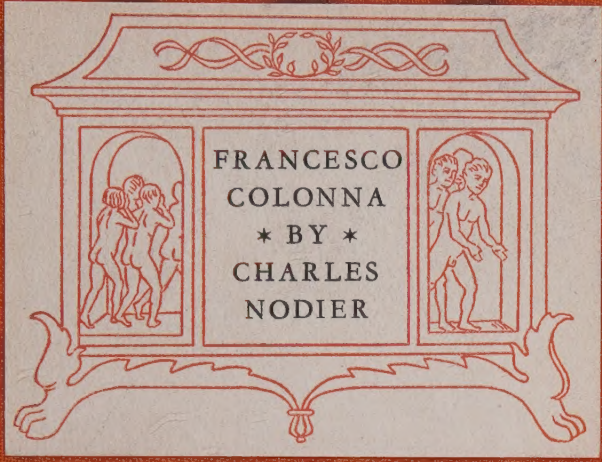



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NODIER, CHARLES  
... FRANCESCO COLONNA

1929








FRANCESCO COLONNA





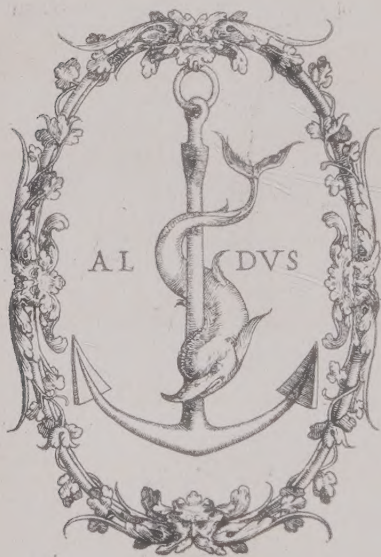


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LA HYPNEROTOMACHIA DI POLIPHILLO,  
CIOE' PVGNA D'AMORE IN SOGNO.  
DOVEGLI MOSTRA, CHE TVTTE LE COSE  
HV MANE NON SONO ALTRO CHE

Sogno : & doue narra molt'altre cose degne  
di cognitione.



RISTAMPATO DI NOVO, ET RICORRETTO

con somma diligentia, à maggior commodo  
de i lettori.

IN VENETIA, M. D. XXXXV.

*mine, during my work in Oxford:*

*John Ruskin.*

*Brantwood, 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
1880.*

CHARLES NODIER  
FRANCESCO COLONNA  
A FANCIFUL TALE OF  
THE WRITING OF THE  
HYPNEROTOMACHIA  
TRANSLATED BY  
THEODORE WESLEY KOCH



CHICAGO  
PRIVATELY PRINTED

1929

WITH REPRODUCTIONS OF THE  
COLOPHON OF THE ALDINE EDI-  
TION OF THE "HYPNEROTOMA-  
CHIA" OF 1499 AND OF THE TITLE  
PAGE OF THE 1545 EDITION IN THE  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY;  
AND OF THE FRESCOES BY TOM-  
MASO DA MODENA IN THE CHAP-  
TER HOUSE OF THE DOMINICANS  
AT TREVISO, SIGNED AND  
DATED 1352

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THEODORE WESLEY KOCH



## FOREWORD



OWARDS the middle of the fifteenth century printing found an unexpected ally in the art of wood-engraving. First used to reproduce crude portraits of saints or religious pictures, it gradually underwent a transformation. When wood-engravers

became aware that block-books and block-printing could not compete with the art of printing with movable type, they were content to replace the engrosser and decorator by doing the initial letters and the ornaments which were to adorn the pages of the printed book. "Wood-engraving, having thus become the ally of printing," says Guido Biagi, "freed it from the yoke of the miniature painters and illuminators. The initial letters, which up to that time had been left for the hand of the artist, were cut in wood, with rich decorations, and printed from blocks. Then wood cuts began to be used to enhance the beauty of the printed page, to serve as frontispieces and to ornament the margins and pictorial compositions illustrative of the text. Before the close of the fifteenth century this art reached its perfection in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, which Aldus Manutius published at Venice in 1499. The discovery of ancient classical inscriptions, with their beautifully cut characters, afforded a model for a harmonious ordering

of the letters, which was of itself sufficient to adorn the page of print. Architectural rules, too, imposing an harmonious balance of lines, were wisely followed by those first printers in their endeavor to render their books as attractive as the manuscript had been. Only one difference remained: the printed book was in monochrome,—its most striking effects had to be obtained in the face of the greatest limitations. It was, therefore, doubly necessary to order the lines and the various parts of the page with the utmost accuracy, to produce an effect which the eye might receive with an agreeable sensation. But this striving after harmony was never so much exaggerated as to produce the monotonous uniformity of modern printing.”

The *Hypnerotomachia* is one of the most sought after of all incunabula. It was the only illustrated book issued by the Aldine Press. “The volume displays a pretentious effort to get away from the commonplace,” says William Dana Orcutt. “On every page Aldus expended his utmost ingenuity in the arrangement of the type,—the use of capitals and small capitals, and unusual type formations. In many cases the type balances the illustrations in such a way as to become a part of them. Based on the typographical standards of today, some of these experiments are indefensible, but in a volume issued in 1499 they stand as an extraordinary exhibit of what an artistic, ingenious printer can accomplish within the rigid limitations of metal type. The illustrations themselves, one hundred and fifty-eight in number, run from rigid

architectural lines to fanciful portrayals of incidents in the story."

The *Hypnerotomachia* is cast in the form of an allegorical romance and is at the same time a descriptive catalogue of art objects, and, as Eugène Müntz said, "a breviary of the architectural knowledge of the Renaissance." A Latin prose paraphrase, attributed to Leonardo Crasso, who sponsored the publication, contains the following summary of the book: "Reader, if you desire to know the contents of this work, know that Poliphilus narrates having dreamed wonderful things. . . . He claims to have viewed many memorable antiquities and pretends to have examined all of them thoroughly. He describes in appropriate terms, in an elegant style, pyramids, obelisks, vast edifices in ruin, various columns, . . . friezes, cornices and their ornaments, . . . a magnificent door, with its proportions. He narrates the terror which he suffered, his meeting with the five senses, symbolized by five young ladies. He depicts a delicious bath, fountains, the Palace of the Queen, which personifies free judgment, an exquisite royal banquet, the various kinds of jewels and their qualities, a game of chess in the form of a ballet, . . . three gardens, the one of glass, the other of silk, the third in the form of a labyrinth symbolizing human life. . . . He shows us Polia, her costume, her face. He says that Polia and he were awaiting Cupid on the shore, where stood a temple in ruins . . . While they were in this neighborhood, Cupid arrived in a skiff rowed by six nymphs . . . They





Attacked by the plague, she had devoted herself to Diana; Poliphilo had found her in the temple and told her what he had suffered for her love. Terrified by a sight of the vengeance of Cupid on cruel maids, she had consoled him, whereupon they were driven from the temple, made their plaint to the priestess of Venus, and were united by the goddess. At this point the dream ends, and Poliphilo, saddened by the envious day, brings his *Hypnerotomachia* to an end, dating it at Treviso on May Day, 1467.

“In the summary on 3<sup>a</sup> we are told that the five nymphs are the five senses. Queen Eleuterylida is Free Will, and a labyrinthine garden stands for human life. It is unlikely that this allegory goes very deep; it may have been dragged in merely to avoid ecclesiastical censure. It is perhaps equally unlikely that Polia (who is once called Lucretia) was a real lady of Treviso, who entered a real convent after the plague which visited the city in 1464 and 1466, though she has been identified with Hippolita Lelio, niece of the ruling bishop. POLIAM FRATER FRANCISCUS COLUMNA PERAMAVIT is the tale told by the initial letters of the successive chapters, but Fra Francesco Colonna had been a Dominican since 1455, and was now a teacher of rhetoric, and if he had an archaeological bishop it is more probable that he was romancing of his love for antiquity than of the bishop's niece. In 1471 he joined the convent of SS. Giovanni e Paolo at Venice, is found at Padua two years later, became sacristan of his convent in 1500, was granted a pittance of firewood, bread and wine in 1521 in conse-

quence of his age and infirmities, and died in 1527. When his romance was published at the expense of the juriconsult Leonardo Crasso, in 1499, Colonna was already 66; at the time of his death he was about 94. Of Crasso, his publisher, little is known. In 1508 he calls himself a 'prothonotarius apostolicus' in petitioning for a renewed privilege for the book. This he cites as '*Polifilo vulgar, opera molto utile et fruttuosa de grandissima elegancia,*' and explains that '*per li tempi e disturbi de guerra*' it had not been possible to export it, and that nearly the whole edition, on which he had spent '*assai centenera de ducati,*' was still unsold. In 1508 the Venetian book-trade had indeed recently passed through a bad time, but the financial failure of the book was perhaps equally due to the '*res una in eo miranda*' on which Crasso had touched in his dedication to Duke Guido, that while written in Italian it could not be understood without a knowledge of Greek and Latin ('*quod cum nostrali lingua loquatur, non minus ad eum cognoscendum opus sit graeca et romana quam tusca et vernacula*'), the Greek, it may be said, being of a somewhat peculiar kind.

"As regards the authorship of the wonderful illustrations, the signature .b. on the third has led to their being attributed to numerous celebrated artists, but it is now fairly well recognized that celebrated artists in Italy did not concern themselves with bookwork, and that .b. is probably the signature of a woodcutters' workshop. Attempts to make a list of other books illustrated by the same hand are baffled by the dual personality which has

to be dealt with. The present writer is inclined to doubt whether the same designer and the same illustrator worked together in any other book." (*Catalogue of Italian Books in the C. W. Dyson Perrins' Collection.*)

The *Hypnerotomachia* is written in a macaronic language, at the same time archaic and vernacular, and is in reality only an exaggerated imitation of Boccaccio's style. The woodcuts have been at various times attributed to Raphael, Giovanni Bellini, Carpaccio and Mantegna. Eugene Piot and Benjamin Fillon attribute them to an illustrator employed by the Aldus family, an artist known under the name of *Maitre au Dauphin* and whom an English art critic, Mr. William Bell Scott, has identified with Stephanus Caesenas Peregrinus. This so-called "Master at the Dolphin" is supposed to have been an artist living in Venice at the end of the fifteenth century, who designed the printer's mark used by Aldus, the anchor and the dolphin, used sometimes with the motto: *Festina lente*, "Make haste slowly." The late Léon Dorez, custodian of manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale, inclined towards Bernardo Parentino from the fact that the hieroglyphics, symbols and emblems would seem to resemble the frescoes which the latter painted in the cloister of San Giustina in Padua.

The French translation of the *Hypnerotomachia*, done by Jean Martin and published by Jacques Kertver in 1546, is likewise ornamented with anonymous woodcuts which have caused as much discussion as those in the original Italian edition, of which they are transpositions, in the

purest French manner, freed from the archaisms of the original. It is, says Mr. Pollard, one of the most interesting cases of the rehandling of woodcuts. The arrangement of the original designs is closely followed, but the tone is completely changed by the substitution of the tall and rather thin figures, which had become fashionable in French woodcuts, for the short and rather plump ones of the original Venetian edition, and also by similar changes in the treatment of the landscapes. The French designs and blocks have been attributed to Geoffroy Tory (who died thirteen years before the publication of the Kertver edition!), to Jean Cousin, and to Jean Goujon (who illustrated a Vitruvius, translated by this same Jean Martin, the cuts in which show considerable affinity with those of the *Songe de Poliphile*). M. Bertrand Guégan, in his *Notes sur Francesco et les éditions du Songe*, expresses the opinion that most of the great artists of the time collaborated with Jean Goujon on this masterpiece. He bases this very plausible hypothesis on the technical variations, the differences in quality of the compositions and on the actual engravings themselves.

Charles Nodier made the love story which is hinted at in the acrostic contained in the *Hypnerotomachia* the basis of the last tale which he wrote. It was published in the *Bulletin de l'ami des arts* of 1843.

My attention was first attracted to this bibliographical story when I was at work on "Tales for bibliophiles, translated from the French" (Chicago, The Caxton Club, 1929) in which will be found Nodier's well known tale



“The Bibliomaniac” and the chapter from the “Memoirs” of Alexandre Dumas, père, giving an account of how he made the acquaintance of Nodier and incidentally got a first lesson in bibliography. The reader interested in Nodier’s attitude towards book collecting is referred to the prefatory material and notes in “Tales for Bibliophiles.”

Jules Janin drew a faithful portrait of Nodier in an obituary notice published in the *Journal des Débats*, 5 février, 1844, which was reprinted with very few changes in the preface to the posthumous edition of “Franciscus Columna; dernière nouvelle de Charles Nodier” (Paris, Techener et Paulin, 1844). This notice was revised and considerably enlarged in the fifth volume of the *Histoire de la littérature dramatique*, where the bibliophile Janin says of the bibliophile Nodier: “His passion for old books had replaced all the passions of his head and of his heart, and even at the bottom of this ardor to discover the brilliant pages of the past, he placed a certain caution.” More than once, not without difficulty and regrets, Nodier sold his beloved library. “Friends,” said Scaliger, “would you know one of the great misfortunes of life? Well, then sell your books!”

Nodier adorned his books with the zeal and care of Grolier himself. To the book thus revived by his tenderness and care, Nodier added his library number and his name. He then described it in his catalogue, and the catalogue at once became a charming and learned book. Then the fine copy went to the highest bidder. Nodier

was satisfied to make a little money by thus selling his rarest chance bibliographical finds—but he sometimes bought them back again the next day.

During May and June, 1927, there was held at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal) of which Nodier was librarian from 1823 until his death on January 27, 1844) an exhibition commemorating the centenary of the founding of the Romantic School. In the souvenir catalogue entitled *Le salon de Charles Nodier et les Romantiques*, M. Louis Batiffol, Administrateur de la Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, gives some interesting facts concerning the building, its occupants, and its place in literary history.

The Arsenal was erected by Sully in 1600 to serve as a residence for the Grand Master of artillery. Enlarged in the eighteenth century, it regained in the nineteenth some reflection of its past glory by means of two famous literary salons. The first of these salons was that of Madame de Genlis, who was granted a residence in the building by Bonaparte. The second salon was that of Charles Nodier, whose singular good fortune it was to make his apartment the cradle of Romanticism. Nodier had courageously taken up the defense of the innovators, received them in his home, encouraged and protected them.

Madame Nodier, full of kindness and of good judgment, a perfect hostess, helped to receive in her simple cordial manner. Much of the success of these evenings was due to the daughter, Marie, whose gaiety, good humor and smiles were a part of the charm of the Arsenal.

Victor Hugo called Marie "Notre Dame de l'Arsenal." Her albums, filled with signatures and autograph compositions of so many celebrated writers, are the best witness of the admiration which she inspired in all who met her. She did not possess great beauty, but she had a certain charm of docile and bewitching femininity which affected the most indifferent, an elegance and grace which won all hearts.

Dumas in his "Memoirs," has left us a vivid picture of these soirées—a chapter which is reprinted in *Le Salon de Charles Nodier*. The table was laid at six o'clock, with three or four extra plates for the regular habituées, and three or four more for the chance comers, of whom one was Dumas and another was Saint-Valery, a librarian like Nodier himself. Saint-Valery was very tall, very learned, but without originality or spirit. In his library he was very rarely obliged to take a ladder to get a book, no matter on how high a shelf it was placed. He stretched out one of his long arms, raised himself on tip-toe and got the required book, even if it were under the frieze.

Once admitted into the pleasant intimacy of the house, one went to dine at Nodier's at his pleasure, says Dumas. If it were necessary to add one, two, or three places to those already set, they were added. If it were necessary to lengthen the table, they lengthened it. But woe betide the one who came as the thirteenth! He was forced to eat at a little side table, unless a fourteenth guest still more unexpectedly arrived to relieve him of his penance. Dumas says that as soon as he was one of these intimates,

his place was fixed once and for all between Madame Nodier and Marie. When Dumas appeared at the door he was received with exclamations of joy and Nodier stretched out his two long arms to shake his hands or to embrace him. "Nodier claimed that I was a stroke of good fortune for him, since I made it unnecessary for him to talk," said Dumas, "but what in such a case was the joy of the indolent master of the house was the despair of his guests. To excuse from talking the most charming talker in the world was almost a crime. It is true that once charged with this vice-royalty of the conversation, I put to the test an extraordinary conceit to properly fulfill my task. There are certain houses where one has spirit without fear, and other houses where one is stupid in spite of himself. I had three houses which I preferred, three houses where my animation, my heartiness, my youth shone incessantly: they were the Nodier house, the house of Madame Guyet-Desfontaines, and the Zimmerman house. . . . Whether Nodier spoke—and then children large and small kept quiet to listen to him—or whether his silence left the conversation to Dauzats, to Bixio and myself, one came always to the end of a charming dinner without having noted the time—a dinner worthy of the most powerful prince on earth, provided this prince was an intellectual prince.

"At the end of this dinner, coffee was served at the same table. Nodier was indeed too much the Sybarite to get up from the table and go and take his mocha standing up uncomfortably in a poorly heated salon, when he







could take it stretched out in his chair in a dining room quite warm and well perfumed with the aroma of fruits and liqueurs.

“During this last act, or rather this epilogue, of the dinner, Madame Nodier arose with Marie to go and light up the salon. I, who took neither coffee nor liqueurs, followed them to aid in this task, where my height was useful to them, since it permitted me to light the chandelier and the candelabra without getting up on the chairs. It goes without saying that if Saint-Valery were there, as he was a foot taller than I, the task of lighting up fell by rights to him. . . .

“To the left on entering, in a nook like an immense alcove, was Marie’s piano. This nook was large enough so that the friends of the house could remain near Marie and chat with her, while she played quadrilles and waltzes with the tips of her fingers which were so agile and so sure. But these quadrilles and these waltzes came only at a given moment: two hours were invariably devoted to conversation. From ten o’clock until one in the morning they danced.

“If Nodier, on leaving the table, went to stretch himself out in his armchair at the side of the fire-place, it meant that he, egoist and Sybarite, wanted to enjoy leisurely the following up of some dream of his imagination in that moment of beatitude which follows the after-dinner coffee. If, on the other hand, making an effort to remain standing, he went to lean up against the mantelpiece, with his calves to the fire and his back to

the mirror, it meant that he was going to tell a story. Then, they smiled in advance at the recital ready to issue forth from that mouth with the fine, witty and mocking lines. Talking ceased. Then there was unrolled one of those charming stories of his youth which seemed like a tale of Longus or an idyl of Theocritus. It was at the same time Sir Walter Scott and Perrault. It was the scholar grappling with the poet. It was memory struggling with imagination.

“Not only was Nodier amusing to hear but he was also charming to see: his long lank body, his long thin arms, his long pale hands, his long face, full of a melancholy serenity, all that harmonized, blended with the slightly drawling speech and with that Franche-Comté accent, and whether Nodier had begun the recital of a love story, of a battle on the plains of the Vendée, of a drama on the Place de la Revolution, or of a conspiracy of Cadoudal or of Oudet, it was necessary to listen almost breathlessly, so well did the admirable art of the narrator know how to draw the juice out of everything. Those who entered the room said nothing, but saluted with the hand, and took a seat in an armchair, or leaned back against the wall; and the recital always finished too soon. One never knew why it stopped, for it was understood that Nodier was able to draw forever from that purse of Fortunatus which is called the imagination. There was never any applause. No, one does not applaud the murmur of a brook, the song of a bird, the perfume of a flower; but when the murmur ceased, the song

vanished, the perfume evaporated, they listened, they waited, they wanted more!

“But Nodier let himself glide softly from the fireside mantel down to his armchair. He smiled and turned towards Lamartine or towards Hugo: ‘Enough of prose like that,’ said he, ‘let’s have some poetry, some poetry! Come on!’

“And, without waiting to be coaxed, one or the other poet, in his turn, with his hands resting on the back of an armchair, or with shoulders firmly planted against the wall, let fall from his mouth the harmonious and serried surge of his poetry; and, then, all the heads turned around, taking a new direction, all the spirits followed the flight of that thought which, borne on its eagle wings, played alternately in the mist of the clouds, among the lightning flashes of the tempest, or amid the rays of the sun.

“This time, they applauded; then, the applause having ceased, Marie went to the piano and a brilliant volley of notes shot out in the air. It was the signal for the quadrille. Chairs and armchairs were arranged. The card players entrenched themselves in the corners, and those who, instead of dancing, preferred to talk with Marie, slipped into the alcove.

“The ball began, and Nodier, who ordinarily played very badly, asked for cards. From this moment on Nodier was annihilated. He had disappeared, and was completely forgotten. Nodier was like the old-time host who effaces himself to give place to the one whom he receives, who then becomes in turn master of his own house.



“Moreover, after having disappeared for a little, Nodier disappeared entirely. He went to bed early, or rather they put him to bed early. To Madame Nodier fell the duty of putting the big child to sleep. Consequently she was the first to leave the salon and she went to open up the bed. Then in the winter, during the very cold spells, when perchance there was no fire in the kitchen, there was seen to pass among the dancers a warming pan, which approached the fireplace in the salon, opened its large jaws, received the hot embers and entered the sleeping room. Nodier followed the warming pan, and there was an end of it!”

Perhaps the tale which follows was read at one of the soirées pictured by Dumas.

“*Franciscus Columna*” was published separately shortly after the author’s death in 1844, and has not been readily accessible until recently, when it was reprinted as number four in the series “Rayon du Mandarin” (Paris, *La Connaissance*, 9 Galerie de la Madeleine, 1927). In his preface to this edition (which was actually printed at Maestricht, Holland) Clement Janin describes Nodier as a man with a large body, mounted on two long legs, a fine head, a smiling face, a roguish eye, a mind always alert, a tireless curiosity, a vast erudition, a real love for the French language, a preference for the short and sparkling page, an aversion for the book when it discussed his own, but a passion for it when it discussed those of others.

A translation of the tale into Catalan, with eight

chromolithographs after J. Triadó, was included in *Contes de bibliòfil*, Barcelona, Institut català de les arts del llibre, 1924, pp. 21-55.

A Spanish translation by Rafael V. Silvari, preceded by the latter's translation of Nodier's *Le Bibliomane*, is contained in the series *Pequeña colección del bibliófilo* (Madrid, Librería de bibliófilos españoles).

Charles Asselineau, author of *L'enfer du bibliophile*, writing in *Le bibliophile français*, November, 1868, said that if he had to award a *prix de la nouvelle* for the century he would give it to *Franciscus Columna, nouvelle bibliographique*. This enthusiasm could not have been shared by many, or the tale would have been more widely known and more frequently printed.

In his review of Bertrand Guégan's new edition of *Le Songe de Poliphile* (Paris, Payot) Fernand Fleuret in *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, July 9, 1927, is not complimentary to the memory of Nodier as a scholar,—no more than was the latter flattering to meticulous scholarship.

Nodier cultivated such widely scattered fields as botany, entomology and grammar. He was at the same time novelist, historian, poet, and bibliophile, endowed, said Sainte-Beuve, with a remarkable gift for inexactitude.

"Nodier possessed such a gift of extravagant invention that one can hardly help believing that he must have been subject to visions and hallucinations," wrote Georg Brandes. "He had the dangerous quality peculiar to a certain type of poetic temperament, that of scarcely being able to speak the truth. No one, not even himself, ever

knew to a certainty whether what he was relating was truth or fiction. Jest is the mean between the two. Nodier was considered one of the most entertaining of Frenchmen, and he was not the least offended when he was told by his friends that they did not believe a word of what he was telling them. . . . He himself never inquired into probabilities. The world of probabilities was not his; he lived in the world of legend, of fantastic fairy tale and ghost story."

R. Vallery-Radot said that "it is certain that the reader of to-day is somewhat at a loss in the company of a book of Nodier's, and feels very much as when, in a military panorama, he sees the wheel of a real caisson, and often a veritable cannon and a cannon ball, which at first sight blend so fully with the painted canvas that it is difficult to say where the actual ends and the illusion begins. If we read his reminiscences and studies of his own time in a credulous spirit, we shall constantly say: 'Nodier is mistaken; what he tells us is not only wholly improbable but actually impossible, and is completely at variance with history'—until the wise reader decides that Nodier's entire writings should bear the title of one of his books: *Contes et Fantaisies*."

Why, then, spend any time on a supposedly historical tale which we know is not based on fact? Why linger over a picture which we know is not true? Why read any work of imagination? If prone to ask such questions, Reader, remember that this tale was not written for you,—nor is it for you now for the first time translated into

English and embellished with facsimiles from the old Venetian book in question and adorned with pictures from the frescoed walls of the seminary in Treviso where Francesco Colonna lived and wrote. Rather was this book done for those who love to dwell in fancy on the life of the Italian Renaissance and to catch a glimpse through the eyes of the imagination of a possible romance that *might* have been behind the writing of one of the world's famous books. It is but a fanciful tale about a book purporting to be based on a dream, and is itself woven of "such stuff as dreams are made on." *Se non é vero, é molto ben trovato.*

The writer of an imaginative work such as this, changes the facts for his purposes, as he has a right to do. Jeanne d'Arc did not die on the battlefield as pictured by Schiller, but was burned by the English as a witch at Rouen. William Tell never lived, and the liberation of Switzerland in the play which Schiller built up about him, is based merely on an old legend. Egmont never loved a little Clara, but was a model husband and the proud father of eleven children. Don Carlos was not the heroic youth depicted by Schiller, but was in reality a weakling. Historical plays and fiction cannot be used as historical sources, but they have their value in our striving towards culture and the development of our own imagination and of our own personality. The main duty of the poet and the novelist is to show us the inner life of their creations and of their own hearts. They do not give us an interpretation of history, but attempt to show us

the powers that move the world. The poet and the novelist satisfy our longing for a more beautiful world. They paint the most beautiful castles, the most ethereal women, the most heroic men.

T. W. K.

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FRANCESCO COLONNA: A TALE  
OF THE HYPNEROTOMACHIA  
BY CHARLES NODIER



PERHAPS you remember our friend the Abbé Lowrich, whom we met at Ragusa, at Spalato, at Vienna, at Munich, at Pisa, at Bologna, and at Lausanne. He is an excellent man, full of wisdom, but he knows a lot of things which one would be glad to forget if one knew them as he does: the name of the printer of a worthless book, the year of the birth of some fool, and a thousand other details of like importance. The Abbé Lowrich has the glory of having discovered the real name of Knicknackius, who was called Starkius, and not, if you please, Polycarpus Starkius, who made eight fine hendecasyllabic verses on the thesis of Kormannus *De ritibus et doctrinâ scarabaeorum*, but Martinus Starkius, who wrote thirty-two hendecasyllabic verses on fleas. Apart from that, the Abbé Lowrich deserves to be known and loved: he has brains, feeling, an active and sincere desire to be of service, and he joins to these precious qualities a lively and singular imagination which gives much charm to his conversation, as long as it does not fall into the minutiae of biography and of bibliography. I have done my share in that field, and when I meet the Abbé Lowrich in my journeying over

the face of Europe I run to him as soon as I see him in the distance. It is not more than three months ago that such a meeting took place.

I had arrived the night before at the Hotel of the Two Towers, at Treviso, but I had reached there late and I had not yet set foot in the town itself. In the morning, as I came down stairs, I saw in front of me one of those odd persons who have a definite physiognomy, no matter from which side one looks at them: a hat unlike any other, placed on the head as no other hat was ever placed; a red and green cravat, knotted like a string, which exceeded by a good four inches the collar of the coat under the left side, and which disappeared by as much under the right side; a pair of trousers one leg of which hung scantily, while the other leg rounded itself out like a pad, in a coquettish way, on the other side of the boot; lastly the immense portfolio, the inseparable portfolio, where lie so many book titles, so many notices, so many plans, so many sketches, so many inestimable treasures for the scholar, but which the rag-picker would never collect. There was no chance of being mistaken. It was Lowrich.

"Lowrich!" I cried,—and we were in one another's arms.

"I know where you are going," said he to me, after the exchange of a few friendly words. And when I had learned that he was as newly arrived as myself, he said: "You have asked the address of a bookseller and they have told you of Apostolo Capoduro, who lives in the

Rue des Esclavons. I am going there also, but without any hope, for I have visited his shop twice in ten years, and I never saw there any volumes older than the novels of the Abbé Chiari. The old book store is lost, as dead as death, reduced to nothing, and barbarous times have arrived. But you have something special to ask of him?"

"I will confess to you," I answered, "that I shall have difficulty in leaving Northern Italy without carrying away the *Dream of Poliphilus*, which I have heard said is a very curious thing, and which, they say, must be found at Treviso, if anywhere."

"If it is found anywhere, is a prudent stipulation," he exclaimed, "for the *Dream of Poliphilus*, or to speak more correctly, the *Hypnerotomachia* of Brother Francesco Colonna is a book which the old bibliographers designate by this characteristic phrase: 'rarer than a white crow.' All that I can tell you is that, if this white crow is found in some bird cage, as no doubt it will be, it is certainly not in Apostolo's. I even believe myself sufficiently sure of my facts to swear here, by the shades of Aldus the Elder (may God be willing to keep him surrounded by an eternal glory!) that if this funny Apostolo succeeds in furnishing you with a copy of the *Hypnerotomachia*, with the good date of 1499,—the second edition being almost in the rank of mediocre books,—I intend and wish to make you a present of it at the expense of my own purse, which this act of munificence would lighten not a little."

Just then we entered the shop of Apostolo who, with



his pen suspended in air over a sheet of paper, seemed absorbed in deep meditation. He noticed our presence at last and seemed to recognize with joy the unforgettable figure of the good Lowrich. "My dear Abbé," said he, embracing him, "is it the Lord who sends you to draw me from the most grievous embarrassment of my life? You must know that I have been publishing for some months the *Literary Gazette of the Adriatic*, which is, as all the world agrees, the most learned and the wittiest of the European magazines. Well, this ingenious and learned magazine, which is destined to call forth the admiration of the world and to reestablish my fortune, is in danger of not appearing tomorrow because of the lack of six columns of a literary supplement, which I seek in vain from my imagination, tired as it is by study and business. It must be that a spirit of malice has plotted my ruin and brought disorder into my editorial office. The young lady muse who wrote my articles on moral education is being confined; the improviser who was to furnish me this morning with an entirely new kind of cantata writes me that he can not finish it short of a week, and the profound calculator, who handles for us the questions of finance and political economy, yesterday got himself put into prison for debt. So, in the name of Heaven, my dear Abbé, seat yourself at this table where I have sweated blood and water all night, without drawing a line from my head, and dash off for me five or six pages, such as they may be,—if it is only a short story which has not been used more than two or three times."

“Very good,” replied the Abbé Lowrich. “We shall have time to busy ourselves with your affairs when we have finished our own. My friend from Paris and I have not come to your place, from the depths of Norway, to supply the place of the missing cantata of a lazy improvisatore, or to spin out a literary supplement, but to see some of these books which merit at least the trouble and the expense of the journey,—a good first edition, well attested,—a fifteenth century book of good date and in fine preservation,—a valuable Aldine, the margins of which have been spared by the English and French binders. Let’s begin there, if it can be done. We shall see to the other thing later. A supplement is soon done.”

“As you please,” replied Apostolo, “and I consent to it all the more willingly since this examination will not take us much time. I have only one volume which is worth being submitted to connoisseurs such as you, but it is a volume,” he added, drawing from its triple envelope a folio of good appearance,—“a volume,” he continued with a solemn air when he had entirely freed it from its prison of wrapping paper,—“a volume,—well, there it is!” And he handed the volume to the Abbé Lowrich, while fastening on him a look full of assurance and of pride.

“Malediction!” murmured Lowrich, after having explored with a glance, as usual, the unknown treasure. He then returned to my side, but he was quite different from what he had been a moment before,—his arms lax, his look dejected, his forehead pale. “Malediction!” he

grumbled in French, in a scarcely articulate voice and in a manner so as to be heard only by me, "it is that confounded book which I promised to give you if it should be found here, the original edition of *Poliphilus*,—the traitor that it is,—and as fine, I assure you, as if it had just come from the press! Here are blows of fate which are reserved only for me!"

"Reassure yourself," I replied laughing, "we shall perhaps obtain it cheaper than you think."

"And how much does Master Apostolo ask for this rarity?"

"Ah! ah!" said Apostolo, "the times are hard and money is scarce. Formerly I should have asked fifty sequins of the Prince Eugene, sixty of the Duc d'Abrantès, and one hundred of an Englishman; but now I must let it go for four hundred miserable Milanese livres, which make exactly four hundred French francs. I shall not come down two quarantani from that!"

"May four hundred famished rats devour your books from this first to the last!" interrupted Lowrich, furious. "Who the devil has ever seen four hundred livres asked for a wretched old book?"

"A wretched old book!" replied Apostolo briskly, almost as animated as Lowrich, "an *editio princeps* of 1467, the first of Treviso, and perhaps of Italy; a *chef-d'oeuvre* of printing and engraving, the illustrations of which can be attributed only to Raphael; an admirable work whose author has remained unknown up to the present in spite of all the research of scholars; a unique or almost unique

piece of which you yourself, Seigneur Abbé, did not perhaps know the existence! It pleases you to call *that* a wretched old book!"

Lowrich grew calmer during this vehement tirade. He seated himself tranquilly, resting his hat on the bookseller's table, and he mopped the perspiration from his brow like a man worn out by long and painful exertions who has just found a suitable place to rest himself quite comfortably.

"Have you finished, Apostolo?" said he in a calm tone, in which entered something of a malign satisfaction. "I hope so, for your reputation and your own interests; for, in four words which you have just uttered, you have let loose four enormous blunders and, if you should continue ever so little, one day would not suffice to recapitulate the errors one by one,—which would not leave me time to write your necessary *feuilleton*. First foolish statement: it is not true that here is a Treviso edition, printed in 1467, for it is a Venetian edition, printed in 1499, from which the last leaf has been removed, to deceive you as to the date, and I had not taken notice of this imperfection, which reduces by more than half the value of your copy. Your good luck insists that I be in a position to remedy it, for chance threw in my way the other day this precious leaf among some wrapping papers and I carefully saved it for an occasion which I did not believe I should meet so soon. We shall see in a moment at what price I can let you have it."

Saying this, the Abbé Lowrich took out from his port-

folio the missing sheet and adjusted it carefully to the volume. "The leaf goes perfectly with my book," said Apostolo, "but I am compelled to agree that it changes a little the nature of it. Where the devil did I read that this was the first edition of Treviso?"

"Let us pass that over," said Lowrich. "We are not at the end. Second blunder: It is not true that the drawings of the book can be attributed to Raphael, whether the edition dates from 1467, or whether it was not printed until 1499, as you have just had the proof, Raphael having been born at Urbino in 1483, as no one doubts,—that is to say, sixteen years after the making of the manuscript, which dates back in fact to 1467, and the greatest admirers of this sublime painter can not suppose that he drew so correctly and so elegantly sixteen years before his birth. It is, then, another Raphael who has done these fine things, and that man, my good Apostolo, I alone know. Wait a little, I have listed only two blunders.

"Third blunder: It is not true that the author of this book has remained unknown to all scholars up to the present, for all scholars know otherwise and the majority of the ignorant are not unaware that it is the work of Francesco Colonna, or Columna, a Dominican of the convent of Treviso, where he died in 1467. Despite what is said by certain stupid biographers who have confused him with the learned doctor Francesco di Colonia, almost his homonym, who survived him about sixty years, the two men are buried a few steps from your shop.







After what I have just told you, Apostolo, I can dispense with demonstrating to you that you have fallen into a fourth error, more serious than the three others, in supposing that the existence of your magnificent old book was unknown to me, and I do not know what keeps me from proving to you what I know by heart."

"I challenge you, on that point, at the outset," quickly replied Apostolo, "for it is written in a language so fantastic, that there is not a soul among my friends of Treviso, Venice and Padua, who has dared to undertake to decipher a page of it. If you know it by heart, as you say, I agree to give it to you for nothing, a sacrifice which I shall make very willingly, moreover, on account of the excellent instruction which I have just received from you, for I was quite ready to announce this volume in my *Literary Gazette of the Adriatic* under the false point of view which you know, and that would have been enough to have made me lose forever the high and good reputation which I enjoy in the book trade."

"What you yourself have just said," replied the Abbé Lowrich, "on the really very bizarre style of our author, and on the vain efforts of so many scholars who have tried to interpret him, proves sufficiently that you ask of me a wearisome and unendurable verification which would take, moreover, our entire day. And what would become of your *feuilleton* while I recite the *Hypnerotomachia* from alpha to omega? I accept your challenge, however, if you are willing to be content with an experiment which is no less decisive, and will be more expedi-

tious and much easier. The chapters of your book are clearly so numerous as to fatigue your patience, but I promise to give you all the initials successively, beginning with the first, on which I see you have just put your finger."

"Let it be as you say," replied Apostolo, "and the first letter of the first chapter—"

"Is a P," said Lowrich. "Hunt the second."

The list was long, but the Abbé went through it even to the thirty-eighth and last chapter, without being disconcerted for a moment and without making a single mistake.

"To guess one initial letter among twenty-four,—that can happen by great chance and without the devil mixing in," sadly observed Apostolo, "but to repeat that feat thirty-eight times in succession,—I must be duped! Take the volume, Seigneur Abbé, and let us never speak of it again!"

"God keep me from taking advantage of your innocent frankness in this matter!" replied Lowrich. "Oh! you phoenix of bibliophiles! What you have just seen is nothing but a sleight of hand trick, hardly worthy of a school boy, and one which you could do at once like myself. Know, then, that the author of this book thought to conceal his name, his profession and the secret of his love, in the initials of his thirty-eight chapters, which compose a phrase the secret of which I advise you not to ask of the *Biographie universelle* of Paris, for it will make you lose the wager which I have just won from you.

This simple and touching phrase is moreover, easy to remember: *Poliam frater Franciscus Columna peramavit*: 'The brother Francesco Colonna adored Polia.' You know as much about it now as Bayle and Prosper Marchand."

"That is singular," said Apostolo in a low tone. "This Dominican was in love. There is a story in that!"

"Why not?" replied Lowrich. "Now, let us take up the pen again and dig out a *feuilleton*, since you have to have it."

Apostolo settled himself comfortably in his chair, dipped his pen in the ink and wrote as follows, placing at the head this title (from which I have wandered a great deal in a digression much too long):

### FRANCESCO COLONNA; A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL STORY

The Colonna family is certainly one of the most prominent of Rome and of Italy, but all its branches have not been favored with the same prosperity. Sciarra Colonna, an impassioned Ghibeline, who made Boniface VIII prisoner of the Agnani, so far lost his temper in the intoxication of his victory as to strike the sovereign pontiff. He suffered cruelly for his violence under the reign of John XXII. He was exiled permanently from Rome in 1328, his children were degraded with him from the nobility, and all his goods were confiscated to the profit of Étienne Colonna, his brother, who had never abandoned the Guelf party. The descendants of the unfortunate Sciarra were lost to view, like himself, in



obscure misery in Venice. In 1444 there remained one sole heir to so many misfortunes, Francesco Colonna, born in the beginning of that year, doubly an orphan, because his father had been assassinated the evening before and his mother had died giving him birth. Francesco, adopted through the piety of Jacopo Bellini, the celebrated historical painter, and tenderly brought up among the latter's children, showed himself worthy of the generous care which he received from his adopted father and illustrious brothers, Giovanni and Gentile Bellini. Beginning at the age of eighteen, he renewed in the history of painting the very recent phenomenon of the precocious triumphs of the young Mantegna. Giotto had one more rival. However, the fatality which had not ceased to attach itself to the life of Francesco did not permit his successes to become glory. It is under the name of Mantegna or of the Bellinis that one admires to-day the *chefs-d'oeuvre* of his brush.

Painting was, moreover, far from being the exclusive object of his studies and affections. He accorded it only a secondary importance among the arts which embellish the sojourn of man on earth. Architecture, which raises monuments to the gods,—solemn intermediaries between earth and Heaven,—absorbed, on the contrary, the greatest part of his thoughts. However, he did not seek the laws and the marvels of it in the gigantic creations of contemporary art, bizarre and often grotesque caprices of the imagination, to which were wanting, according to him, the approbation of reason and of taste. Carried

away by the movement of the Renaissance which had begun to make itself felt in Italy, Francesco's only connection with this modern world which Christianity had renewed was through his faith. Antiquity had, moreover, all his admiration and all his devotion, and a strange alliance had been formed in his mind between the beliefs of the religious man and the esthetics of the pagan. He carried this preoccupation too far to see in the modern languages themselves, more or less grossly corrupted by the barbarians, anything else than rustic jargons, which were good only to serve as interpreters to man in the material necessities of life and which were not able to elevate themselves to the eloquent or poetic translation of ideas and sentiments. As a result he composed for his use a sort of private dialect where Italian entered only for certain forms of syntax and certain soft endings, but which sprang more immediately from the Homerides, or from Livy and Lucan, rather than from Boccaccio or Petrarch. This singular turn of spirit, which was then the mark of an original organization and of a character destined, according to all appearances, to exercise a great influence on the century, had isolated Francesco from the rest of the world. He passed generally for a melancholy visionary, a prey to delusions of his genius and insensible to the sweetness of everyday life. He was seen, however, sometimes in the palace of the famous Leonora Pisani, who was the heiress, at twenty-eight years of age, of the greatest fortune which was known in all the Venetian states,—second only to that of her cousin Polia, the only

daughter of the last of the Poli of Treviso. Now, Leonora's house was at that time the sanctuary of poetry and of the arts, and the influence of the muse naturally summoned to it all the talent of the epoch. It was soon noticed that Francesco appeared there more frequently, although he was more absorbed in his reveries and was sadder than usual. But his visits suddenly diminished, and finally they ceased.

Polia dei Poli, of whom I have just spoken, was then at the Pisani Palace, where Leonora had decided to pass the mad weeks of the Carnival. Younger by eight years than her cousin, and more beautiful than Leonora herself, Polia, devoted like many young girls of good family to serious studies, profited by her sojourns in the capital of the scholarly world. To perfect herself in the learning which is today altogether unfamiliar to her sex, the habit of these solemn meditations had given to her face something cold and austere which was mistaken for pride. People were never much surprised at this, for in Polia ended the old Roman family of Lelia, from which she was descended through Lelius Maurus, founder of Treviso. She was brought up under the eyes of an imperious and haughty father, so proud of the splendor of his race that he would have regarded as a misalliance the marriage of his daughter with the greatest prince in Italy. They knew, moreover, that the treasures of which she would one day have the disposal could suffice for the dowry of a queen. She had, however, accorded to Francesco some tokens of an almost affectionate welcome in

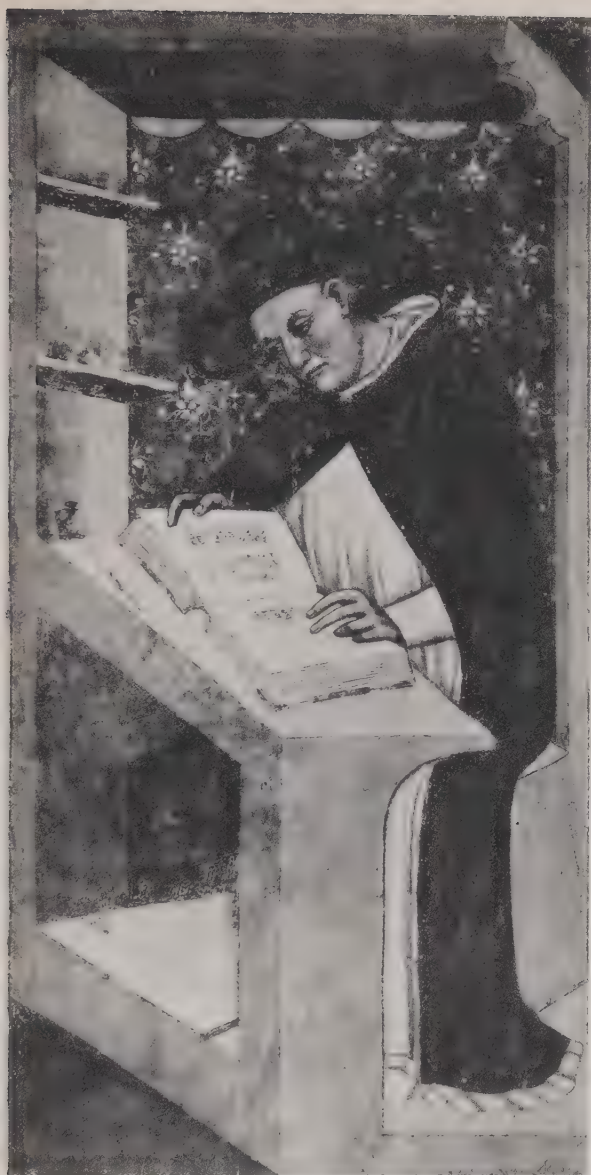
their first meetings; but she seemed to have prescribed for herself, little by little, a reserve which amounted almost to severity, not to say disdain, and when he suddenly abstained from showing himself at the Pisani Palace, she no longer seemed to be interested in him.

It was during the month of February, 1466. The spring, often precocious in this beautiful region, began to load the country side with all its favors. Polia was disposed to return to Treviso and her cousin multiplied around her the varied fêtes which were able to make the stay at Venice sweeter and to make it more difficult for her to leave. One day had been set aside for gondola trips on the Grand Canal and on the large and deep arm of water which separates the queen city from the solitude of its Lido. Francesco had not been forgotten in the invitations of Leonora Pisani, and the letter which he had received from her enclosed such friendly and touching reproaches on his long absence that he did not conceive the possibility of a refusal. Moreover, as we have said, Polia was on the eve of her departure, and it is easy to believe that Francesco desired to see her again, in spite of the usual coldness of her reception; for, on reflecting more and more on the extreme change which had so promptly manifested itself in their relations, he had ended by persuading himself that the capricious change had another motive than hatred. As the gondolas were leaving he found himself on the steps of the Pisani Palace, which was the general meeting place. The ladies, masked and covered with dominos all alike, at the agreed sign went

out from the vestibule in a crowd and each one of them came to select, as was the custom, with the decent familiarity which the disguise permitted, the companion whom it pleased her to have for the trip. This method, more gracious and better understood than that which has succeeded it in balls and assemblies, offered moreover inconveniences much less serious. Women are never more attentive to the care of their reputation than on the too rare occasions when the care of it is intrusted to themselves. Francesco was waiting then, immovable and with eyes cast down, until some one should deign to notice him,—when a pretty gloved hand came to support itself on his arm. He received the unknown lady with a modest and respectful ardor and conducted her to the gondola which was prepared to receive them. An instant later, the elegant flotilla was rowed away to the rhythmic noise of the oars on the calm and smooth surface of the canal.

The lady, who was seated at the left of Francesco, remained some time silent, as if, before speaking, she had had need of controlling and conquering some involuntary emotion. Then she loosened the ties of her mask, threw it back on her shoulders, and fixed her eyes on Francesco with that sweet and serious assurance which self-consciousness gives to elevated souls. It was Polia. Francesco trembled and felt a sudden shudder glide through all his veins, for he had not expected anything of this kind. Then he bowed his head and covered his eyes with his hand in the fear that there might be a sort of profanation in looking at Polia at so close a range.







“This mask is useless,” said Polia. “I have no reason to profit from the custom which authorizes me to keep it. Friendship has no need of it and its feelings are too pure for it to blush to express them. Don’t be surprised, Francesco,” she continued, after a moment’s silence, “to hear me speak of my friendship for you, after so many days of rigorous constraint when I have been able to give you room for doubting it. My sex is subject to special laws of decorum which do not permit it to abandon its most legitimate sympathies because of the interpretations of the multitude, and there is nothing more difficult than to pretend in a proper degree an indifference of heart which one does not feel. Today I am going to leave Venice and, although I am destined to live very near you, it is rather probable that we shall never see one another again. Henceforth there is no longer possible any communication between us other than that of memory and I was not willing to part from you, leaving you with a false idea of me and carrying away an uneasy and painful idea of you which would trouble my life’s repose. I have provided for the first by an explanation which I believed due you; I expect from your sincerity that you will reassure me on the second by a confidence which perhaps you owe me also. Don’t be alarmed, Francesco. You are going to remain the sole judge of the propriety of my questions.”

After a moment, Francesco opened his lowered eyes. He dared to look at Polia. He chose his words with particular attention. “Ah, madam,” he cried, “God is my

witness! My soul has no secret which does not belong to you."

"Your soul has a secret," replied Polia, "a secret which afflicts your friends and which certain persons among those who love you best would have an interest in penetrating. Endowed with all the advantages which promise a happy future: youth, genius, knowledge and fame already won, you abandon yourself, however, to the languors of a mysterious sadness, you are consumed by a mysterious care, you neglect the works on which your reputation is founded, you flee from the world which seeks you to hide in an almost impenetrable solitude,—days which so much success should embellish. In fact, according to the rumors which are spread abroad, you are on the point of breaking entirely with the society of men and of locking yourself up in a monastery. Is what I have just told you true?"

Francesco appeared moved by a thousand different emotions. He needed some moments to collect his senses. "Yes, madam," he replied, "it is true. At least all that was true this morning. An unexpected event has since changed the course of my ideas, without changing my resolves. I shall enter a monastery and my pledges are irrevocable; but now I shall enter it with a spirit full of consolation and of joy, for my existence is complete and I do not picture any lot on earth so happy as to make me envy it. Born obscure and poor, but stronger than my fortune, I had measured my unhappiness only by the immense emptiness into which my heart was plunged. This

emptiness is filled by the most delicious of hopes: you will remember me!"

Polia looked at him tenderly. "I wish indeed," said she, "not to see in your words a simple play of the imagination, nor one of those flattering condescensions of politeness with which people think they can sufficiently repay friendship. It seems to me that this artificial language of cold people is not suitable between us. I believe, then, that I begin to understand some of the things which you have said to me,—all except your resolution. But," she added, smiling, "I do not understand them sufficiently."

"You are going to understand them better," replied Francesco, encouraged, "for I shall tell you all. Pardon, however, the confusion and irresolution of my words, for of all the circumstances of my life, this one is the most unforeseen. The strange position in which I was born,—without parents, without protector, almost without friends, deprived of a great name and of an independent fortune,—would doubtless suffice to explain my natural melancholy. It is a cruel confession to make to oneself,—that of a misfortune dating from the cradle and which pursues one through life. This idea is, however, the first of which I was able to take notice. I had to pay off the material debt of gratitude before thinking a moment of myself, and I have no need of telling you that I succeeded in so doing. From then on my courage was strengthened. I had but little regret for the grandeur and the opulence which had vanished forever. I went further.



I congratulated myself sometimes, in my childish pride, on owing all my fame to myself and on being able one day to force the family which repulsed me to envy the celebrity of my repudiated name. Such are the illusions of inexperience and vanity. One day was to destroy all and to recall me to my misfortune and to my nothingness."

"Alas," continued Francesco, "here is the mystery which your too kind curiosity shows a desire to penetrate, and which reason prescribes for me as a law to hold hidden in my bosom. But how shall I dare reveal to you these sad and profound secrets of sick hearts which philosophy and wisdom regard as a boyish infirmity of the spirit and above which the elevation of your character holds you too highly placed for you to deign to accord them any other sentiment than pity? I loved, madam!"

Here Francesco stopped for some time; but reassured by a look from Polia, he continued in these terms: "I was in love without having thought about it, without appreciating the consequences of my extravagant passion, without dreading them for the future, for I lived entirely in the impressions of the present. I loved a woman whom one would picture to all the world by picking out the rare qualities with which she is clothed, and which the sky seems to have entrusted to the earth only to recall to us the inexpressible happiness of the condition which we have lost. I loved her, madam, without thinking that she was noble among all the nobility,

that she was rich among all the rich; that I myself was the poor Francesco Colonna, the unknown pupil of Bellini, and that all the efforts of a happy work would never lead me to anything but a sterile reputation. Such is the effect of that passion which dazzles, which blinds, which kills. When reflection had led me back to myself, when I had searched with a frightened eye, with the bitter laugh of despair, there was no longer time to retrace my steps: I was lost.

“The first thought of unfortunates is to die; that is as easy as it is natural, because it cuts all questions and cures all perplexities. But this desperate death, far from hastening the day where I must reproach myself about her in a better world, could it not separate me from her forever? This was quite a new idea which withheld my arm, ready to strike. I measured the future of which I was going to be deprived by the impossibility of being resigned for a few days. I condemned myself painfully to live without hope, but without fear, to attain to that moment where two souls, freed from all the ties which have weighed on them, may examine themselves, know themselves and unite themselves for all time. I made of that which I love an object of worship for my entire life; to it I raised an inviolable altar in my heart and there I dedicated myself as an immortal sacrifice. Shall I tell you, madam, that, under my unconquerable sadness, this project, once arrested, is mixed with some joy? I understood that this marriage, which began by widowhood and was to end in possession, was perhaps preferable to

ordinary marriages which finish with evil days. I no longer saw in the years which remain to me to pass among men anything but a long vigil of nuptials which death would crown with an eternal happiness. I felt the necessity of isolating myself from the world, to collect myself in an austere and yet rapturous frame of mind, which suffers nothing at all from parting, and that is why I embrace the duties of the monastic profession. May God be willing to pardon the weakness of his creature! The oath which will dedicate me to Him in three days, is the oath which unites me indissolubly to her whom I love and which will give me rights over her only in Heaven. Permit me to repeat in conclusion, madam, that the accomplishment of this design costs my resignation no more since a generous compassion has left me to conceive the hope of not being forgotten!"

"In three days!" cried Polia. "Indeed," she continued, "I have too little time to reflect on the secret which you have just confided to me to dare to stop to form an opinion, and above all a judgment; but it seems to me that if the woman on whose account you made such resolutions is not ignorant of them, as I was ignorant of them a moment ago, she was unworthy of inspiring them."

"She is ignorant of them," continued Francesco, "for she does not know that I love her. Oh! doubtless my heart would imbibe ineffable consolation from the idea that she knew my love, and that she was not absolutely insensible to it, and that she would accord it at least the

memory of pity! Of all these torments of love, the most cruel perhaps is to remain unknown by the beloved one; of all the sentiments, that dull indifference, which one feels towards the stranger, is perhaps more painful than love can fear. But why put into a happy and peaceful heart griefs which one is scarcely capable of bearing himself. Either my passion will be rejected, as I suppose, and then I shall have gained the verification of this sad doubt, or it will be shared and I should have to suffer for two. Why do I say, suffer for two? My despair for myself, it is my life, since I have found enough strength to live with it. Hers would indeed have killed me."

"You carry your suppositions too far, Francesco," Polia quickly replied. "Who knows whether she does not suffer the same pains and the same anguish as you? Who knows if she does not aspire at this moment to tell you about it? What would you say, if this noble and rich girl whose fame dazzles you, but whose soul is probably calmer than yours, what would you say, Francesco, if, of her own accord, she came to offer you her hand,—if, subjected to an unquestioned and inflexible power, she came to promise it to you?"

"What would I say, Polia?" replied Francesco, with a cold dignity. "I should refuse it. To dare to love that which I love, one must be, up to a certain point, worthy of her and my most constant study has been to ennoble my soul to bring it nearer hers. By what right should I receive the high position which society refuses me? With what boldness should I go to seat myself at fortune's

banquet, I, who have for an endowment only obscurity and misery? Oh! rather a thousand times the horrible chagrin that consumes me than the shameful fame of an adventurer repulsed by the world and enriched by love!"

"I have not finished," interrupted Polia. "These scruples are exaggerated, but I understand them and share them. The world, as it is made, demands strange sacrifices and that particular one will perhaps be asked for by your character; but a character of the same quality as yours could answer to it by another kind of denial. Grandeur and fortune are capricious accidents of chance, which one can throw off when one wishes. The artist and the poet are the same everywhere: he has everywhere success and glory; but on the other side of the arm of the sea, the moneyed and titled woman who has known how to abdicate these vain privileges of birth, is nothing but a woman. If this woman came to say to you: 'My grandeur, I renounce it; my fortune, I abandon it; here am I, ready to become humbler and poorer than you and to give up to you, as to my sole support, the entire destiny of my life,'—Francesco, what would you reply to her?"

"I should fall at her knees," said Francesco, "and I should answer thus: Angel from Heaven, preserve the rank and advantages which Heaven has given you. You must be and remain that which you are and the unfortunate one who would be capable of letting himself be carried away by this tender and sublime transport of your heart, would never have merited occupying a place in it.



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He can no longer elevate himself to your level except by a constant resignation, easy to him who hopes and above all to him who is loved. It is not I who will make you descend from the high rank in which God has placed you not without a motive, to submit yourself to the vicissitudes of an uneasy existence, poisoned by needs which renew themselves ceaselessly, and perhaps one day by incurable regrets. My happiness is complete. It surpasses all my hopes since you have granted me all that you could take from obligations which your name imposes upon you. You love me, I should add, and you will always love me, since you have not recoiled before the resolution to give your life to mine. Your life, oh, my dearly beloved! I accept it and I take it as a sacred trust, of which I shall soon render account before the Lord, our Judge; for life is short, even for those who suffer. Whatever weak people say about it, this life is only a place of passage where the souls come to try themselves out and if your soul, also as faithful as it is devout, remains married to mine during the years which time still metes out to us, the whole of eternity is ours."

Polia remained silent for some time. "Yes, yes," she cried in exaltation. "God has not instituted a more holy and inviolable sacrament. It is thus that a love such as yours has had to console this hope and it is in the marriage of the heart that the rest of men and your heavenly spouse will speak to you as I speak to you if she has heard you."

"She has heard me," replied Francesco, letting his

head fall into his hands with a torrent of tears.

"And so," continued Polia, as if she had not understood his last words, "in three days you will take the vows of one of the religious orders of Venice?"

"Of Treviso," replied Francesco. "I have not forbidden myself the happiness of seeing her sometimes!"

"Of Treviso, Francesco? Where you know only me?"

"Only you!" replied Francesco.

At this moment the hand of the young princess was clasped in that of the young painter.

"We failed to notice," said she, smiling, "that the gondola had stopped and that it is already on its way back to the Pisani Palace; but we have nothing more to say to one another on earth. However, our last farewell is not without sweetness, if we have well understood one another, and our first interview will be still sweeter."

"Adieu, forever!" said Francesco.

"Adieu, for all time!" said Polia.

Then she replaced her mask and descended.

The next morning, Polia was at Treviso. Three days later at the Monastery of the Dominicans, the bell tolled, announcing the profession of faith of a new monk and his eternal death to the world. Polia passed the entire day in prayer in her private chapel.

Francesco submitted easily to his new destiny. Sometimes he thought of his conversation with Polia as a dream, but, more often he retraced with himself the smallest details of it with the enthusiasm of a child and he went to the point of congratulating himself on having

inspired in his unhappiness a love which did not fear at all the vicissitudes of fortune and of age. In a few days, he accustomed himself to devote his time to the religious duties and the laborious leisure of the artist, sometimes elaborating those pure and naïve frescoes which one still admires in the monastery of the Dominicans,—although the arrogant heedlessness of modern art has let them deteriorate,—sometimes collecting in a book, the favorite object of his studies, all the impressions of his genius and especially of his love. He had taken for the frame of this vast and bizarre work the slightly vague form of a dream where he hoped to live again fully, and nothing was more proper, according to him, than to represent, in its apparent confusion, the fortuitous linking up of the ideas of the recluse abandoned to his thought. It is known that, thanks to one of the rare moments in which he had permitted himself to exchange a few tender words with Polia, he was assured that she would accept the dedication of this strange poem and he tells us that he renounced entirely the vulgar tongue in which he had conceived it and began (*lasciando il principiato stilo*), to give himself up to that learned language where he had neither models nor imitations and which furnished him as he wrote the learned preoccupations of the antiquary. A year had passed in these pleasant tasks mingled with sweet illusions, and Francesco had just started on his work when the most crushing news which could rend his heart came over the walls of the Dominicans. Young Antonio



Grimani, formerly admiral and doge of the republic, but already the most brilliant of its nobles and the highest of its hopes, was said to have come to ask for the hand of Polia; and they added that the hand of Polia had been granted to him. It was the day when Francesco was to present his book to Polia. He fortified himself under the blow which had just struck him, went to the Palace and stopped on the threshold of the reception room.

"Come, my brother," said Polia, on seeing him, "you come to tell us those marvelous secrets of your art, the treasure which Christian humility refuses to the world and which we must obtain only in secrecy." At the same time she sent away, by a gesture, her ladies and her servants, and Francesco alone remained before her. His legs sank under him, a cold perspiration covered his forehead, his pulse beat with violence, his bosom heaved as if he were going to collapse. Polia raised her eyes from the manuscript to the monk. The pallor of Francesco, the blood-shot halo which encircled his eyes, exhausted from tears, the convulsive trembling of his livid and limp hands, showed her what was passing in the heart of her lover. She smiled with pride.

"You have heard talk," said she to him, "of my approaching marriage with Prince Antonio Grimani?"

"Yes, madam," replied Francesco.

"And what do you think of this alliance?"

"That no man is worthy of contracting such an alliance with you, but that Prince Antonio has more rights in that direction than any one else, and that it would

seem to fulfill the wishes of Venice,—and of yourself. May it be favorable and happy!"

"I have refused it this morning," replied Polia.

Francesco looked at her, as if he asked in the eyes of Polia whether her mouth had not betrayed her thought.

"You know better than any one," continued Polia, "that my faith is engaged elsewhere and that it is so irrevocably; but I must forgive your suspicions, for your own faith is assured to me by the oath which binds you to the altar, and I have never given you a similar guarantee. Listen, Francesco. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the day when you made your first vows and it is in the last service of the morning that you will render them more indissoluble and more sacred still in renewing them before the Lord. Have you during the year changed the manner of thinking on the nature of the necessity of this sacrifice?"

"No, no, Polia!" cried Francesco, falling on his knees.

"That is enough," continued Polia. "I have varied no more than you. I shall be at the last service of the morning and I shall bind myself with all the strength of my soul to the vow which you are going to repeat, so that you may know that between the heart of Polia and inconstancy there are also perjury and sacrilege."

Francesco tried to reply, but when the words came to his lips, Polia had disappeared.

The young monk had almost as much difficulty in supporting his joy as his misfortune. He felt that he had no more strength to be happy, for the vigor of his life, used

up by so many contrary emotions, was near the breaking point.

The next day, at the last morning service, when the monks entered the choir, Polia was seated in her usual place in the first row of benches reserved for the nobility. She raised herself and went to kneel in the middle of the pavement of the large nave.

Francesco had seen her. He renewed his vows with an assured voice, descended the steps from the altar and prostrated himself on the floor. At the moment of the elevation of the host, he stretched himself out his full length, throwing his hands in front of his head.

At the conclusion of the service, Polia left the church; the monks passed one after another, kneeling low before the sanctuary, but Francesco did not abandon his position at all, and no one was surprised at it, for they had often seen him thus prolong the duration of a prayer in an immovable ecstasy.

At the evening service, Francesco had not changed his position. A young brother descended from the choir stalls, approached him, leaned towards him and took one of his hands in his own, drawing it towards him to recall him to his accustomed duties. Then he raised himself, crossed himself, looked up to Heaven and, turning towards the assembled monks, said: "He is dead!"

This event, one of those which are forgotten so quickly in the memory of a new generation, had happened more than thirty-one years before, when on a winter's evening in 1598, a gondola stopped before the shop of

Aldus Pius Manutius, whom we call the Elder. A moment later they announced in the study of the scholar-printer the visit of the Princess Hippolita Polia of Treviso. Aldus ran up to her, brought her in, made her sit down and stood struck with admiration and respect before this celebrated beauty whom a half century of life and of grief had rendered more solemn, without taking away from her splendor.

"Learned Aldus," said she, after having deposited on his table a bag of two thousand sequins and a rich manuscript, "as you will be in the eyes of the most remote posterity, the most learned and the most able printer of all ages, so the author of the book which I entrust to you will leave behind him the fame of the greatest painter and of the greatest poet of our century which is drawing to a close. Sole depository of this treasure, which I shall reclaim when your art shall have reproduced it, I have not been willing to entirely deprive from possessing it those spirits, favored by heaven, who know how to appreciate the conceptions of genius. But to multiply the copies of it I have awaited the moment when I could ask them from immortal presses. You know now, learned Aldus, what I hope from you: A masterpiece worthy of your name and capable of perpetuating by itself the memory of it throughout all future times. When this gold is exhausted, I will furnish more."

Then Polia arose and leaned with both hands on the women who had accompanied her. Aldus followed her as far as the gondola, showing her his submission by

respectful salutations, but without speaking a word to her, since he was not unaware of the fact that, withdrawn for more than thirty years in an inviolable solitude, she had renounced the society and conversation of men.

The book in question is entitled *La Hypnerotomachia di Poliphilo*, cioè, *pugna d'amore in sogno*, that is to say "the combat of love in dreams" and not "the combat of sleep and of love," as it is translated by M. Ginguené, author of the "Literary history of Italy." We do not pretend to conclude, therefore, God forbid—that M. Ginguené, the author of "Literary history of Italy" does not know Italian. We have more indulgence for the vagaries of talent."

\* \* \*

"Sign that now as you like" said Lowrich rising. "I am not in the habit of putting my name to these trifles, and heaven is my witness that I have never granted similar little stories to booksellers except to get books."

"May all the stories which you will still write," said Apostolo, "enrich your library with a volume equal to that one! It is yours and I owe it to you twice over."

"It is mine!" said Lowrich, taking possession of it with enthusiasm. "Or rather it is yours," he continued gayly, passing it over into my hands. "I promised it to you this morning."

Thus it was that the most magnificent copy of the *Poliphilus*, a giant in my Lilliputian collection, figures there today *nec pluribus*. I submit it willingly to the attention of amateurs, who cannot but recognize in it a magnificent book—and not expensive.







## POSTSCRIPT: THE IDEAL BOOK



PAUL VALÉRY, the philosophical poet, successor to the seat of Anatole France in the French Academy, has recently written a preface for the first number of the new technical periodical, *Arts et métiers graphiques* (Paris, Hachard)—a preface which was given advance publication in *L'Illustration*, September 10, 1927, and in his *Notes sur le livre et le manuscrit* (Maestricht & Paris, 1926). Under the caption of "Two virtues of a book," he discusses, first, the legibility of the text page, and, secondly, the book as a physical object,—two independent points of view. The article was rather carelessly translated in *The Living Age*, February 1, 1928, where it was referred to as "a characteristically French treatment of a simple theme. His elaborate analysis of the virtues of a book is typical of all his work, both verse and prose, and rather more comprehensible than some passages whose meaning we have vainly tried to comprehend."

"The text seen and the text read are things quite distinct," says M. Valéry, "since paying attention to one of them precludes our paying attention to the other. There are very beautiful books that do not tempt us into reading them,—fine masses of black on a field of pure white. But this wealth and this power of contrast,

obtained at the expense of space between the lines, apparently much sought after in England and in Germany, where they try to pattern after certain models of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, are apt to weigh on the reader and seem a little too archaic. Modern literature does not lend itself to these compact forms, so crowded with type. On the other hand there are very readable books, with well-spaced pages, which are devoid of grace, insipid to the eye, or even frankly ugly. Because of this independence of the qualities which a book may possess, printing can be a real art. When it serves only our mere need of reading, it dispenses with artists, for the demands of readableness can be defined with exactness and be satisfied by means equally definite and uniform. Experience and analysis will suffice to determine the functions of the type-engraver, the compositor, and the pressman, to obtain a clear and distinct text. But as soon as the printer realizes the complexity of his work, he immediately feels it his duty to be an artist, for the duty of the artist is to choose, and choice is governed by the number of possibilities. Everything which makes for uncertainty appeals to the artist, although he may not always attain his ends.

“The artist-printer finds himself confronted with the complex situation of the architect who is concerned over the harmony between the *fitness* of his construction and its *appearance*. The poet is doomed to struggle between the form and the content, between plans and language. In all the arts (and that is why they are arts) the arrange-

ment and the final harmony of the independent qualities which must be put together are never obtained by rule nor automatically, but by a miracle or by hard work,—by miracles *and* by hard work freely combined.

“A book is physically perfect when it is easy to read, delightful to look at; when one passes from reading to contemplation and from contemplation back to reading again as easily as one accommodates oneself to the insensible visual changes involved. In such cases the black and white parts of the page relieve each other, the eye moves without effort across the well-regulated domain, appreciates the ensemble and the details, and feels itself to be in ideal situation to perform its functions. This ideal can only be obtained by collaboration between the type-designer and the printer. In the last analysis all the form must spring from the type, which cannot be created by pure caprice. Its height, its breadth and its thin strokes must depend on its bulk. I even think that it is a mistake to reproduce one style of type in different sizes. The art of the printer abounds in subtle difficulties, in imperceptible niceties of the greatest number. Until now no one has ever dreamed of reproaching the masters of this art with having worked furiously to satisfy only a barely perceptible group of the *élite*. What many people deny to certain authors whom they blame for not writing for the general public, they willingly concede to artists of another class. Stendhal, however, almost pokes fun at the great Bodoni. As he was passing through Parma, Stendhal did not fail to visit the celebrated print-



ing establishment of the Grand Duchy. Bodoni was struggling to find the ideal arrangement for a title-page. How to create that pure façade which he dreamed of for an edition of Boileau? 'After having shown me all his French authors,' says Stendhal, 'he asked me which I preferred, the Télémaque, the Racine or the Boileau. I confessed that all seemed to me equally beautiful.—“Ah, sir!” exclaimed Bodoni, “you do not *see* the Boileau title-page!”—I studied it a long time and at last I confessed that I saw nothing more perfect in this title-page than in the others.—“Ah, sir!” cried Bodoni, “Boileau-Despréaux, in a single line of capitals! I searched six months, sir, before I was able to find this type arrangement.”—The title was arranged thus:

ŒUVRES  
DE  
BOILEAU-DESPRÉAUX

'There,' concludes Stendhal, 'is the ridiculous thing about the fads of this century, given over to affectations, in which, I confess, that I do not believe.'

"To sum up," says M. Valéry, "a fine book is above all else a perfect reading device, whose qualities are definable rather exactly by the laws and the methods of physiological optics. The fine book is at the same time a work of art, a thing which has its personality, which bears the marks of special thought, which suggests the noble intention of a happy and free arrangement. Let us

remark here that typography excludes improvisation. It is the fruit of unseen efforts, the subject of an art which perpetuates only finished work, which rejects rough drafts and sketches, and which knows nothing of intermediate states between existence and non-existence. Thus we learn a great and important lesson.

“The mind of the writer is seen as in a mirror which the printing press provides. If the paper and the ink are in accord, if the type is clear, if the composition is well looked after, the adjustment of line perfect, and the sheet well printed, the author feels his language and his style anew. He sees himself reclothed with honors which perhaps are not due him. He thinks he hears a clearer, firmer voice than his own, a voice faultlessly pure, articulating his words, dangerously detaching all his words. Everything feeble, effeminate, arbitrary and inelegant which he wrote, speaks too clearly and too loud. To be magnificently printed is a very precious and important tribute.”

M. Lucien Farnoux-Reynaud, in an article “Du beau livre absolu,” in *Le jardin du bibliophile*, the Christmas number of *Le Crapouillot*, 1927, says that he approves of M. Valéry's description of a fine book as above all a perfect reading device. Everything which proves useless is ugly. For M. Farnoux-Reynaud, therefore, a fine book is one which exactly serves its purpose. Only in the first stage does it suggest reading. The definitive purpose of a book is to communicate to us the mental state of its author, either at the end of a reasoning process or by a

succession of emotional shocks, and that by means of the thing written. What this writer would call a fine book in the abstract is one which would be written freely, as one talks,—a book that would cause all the university professors and the pedants to die of apoplexy. He would have the type characters legible, of fine proportions and quite airy. Each page should be worked over carefully by an artist who understands the text and will try by his choice of fixed arabesques, and even sometimes of full-page illustrations, to call forth that reaction which the simple process of reading rarely succeeds in producing. The artists of the Middle Ages were in the right. A certain blue suggests to us angelic prayers; interlaced gold enhances the effect of a *Magnificat*. One might choose the tint of the paper according to the kind of writing. We know that red calls forth joy, that orange has a sensual quality, and so on. What astonishing research and subtle distinctions would be required of the printer who would be an artist! What cruel and homesick poet will appear with bared soul in the half-mourning of violet? How many writers would merit the devouring black on which nothing at all would show!

T. W. K.

HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI, VBI HV  
MANA OMNIA NON NISISOMNIVM  
ESSE DOCET. ATQVE OBITER  
PLVRIMA SCITV SANE  
QVAM DIGNA COM  
MEMORAT.

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CAVTVMEST, NE QVIS IN DOMINIO  
ILL. S. V. IMPVNE HVNCLI  
BRVMQVEAT  
IMPPRIME  
RE.

[*Translation:* Hypnerotomachia of Poliphilus, wherein he teaches  
that all human affairs are nothing but a dream and incidentally  
considers many worthy things cleverly and wisely.]

\* \* \*

Warning: No one in the domain of the illustrious Venetian Senate  
is allowed to reprint this book.]

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